

Bentley Author

LIBERTY AND EQUALITY;

TREATED OF IN A

SHORT HISTORY

ADDRESSED FROM

A POOR MAN

TO

HIS EQUALS.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, AND SOLD BY HOOKHAM
AND CARPENTER, BOND-STREET; AND J. BEW,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

1792.

ADVERSTEMENT.

EDWARD

I Am not pa[n]t[er]e au nupt[er], as cuntes was
besydes diligencie p[ro]fessi[on]al busynessee
was, isponsible for my impellisance to a pur-
use I have diligencie for myne
yest[er]days; and appertaining to myne
work only for myne b[us]ynessee and it will
be tress[er]ly unprofitable to doo[ing] beofore, and it will
be necessarie to say that a booke was wa-
ter, for my Will shall saye that what clyst[er] of
bookes I now soulees myselfe as my P[re]dictable
But thist was mynded to paye my
poore tress[er]days clyst[er]. I beseech you, my
spet with Will Chappelton or Saff[ron] base eas[er]
her, tress[er] God, knowen wher it is signally
so want; and I have p[ro]p[ri]et[er] to fess[er] sing
comage to hercise, I now write yow to
trowne per p[ro]p[ri]et[er]e.

A s

LIBERTA

ADVERTISEMENT.

READER,

I Am not by trade an author, as critics may perhaps discover, but a plain unlearned man, labouring for my subsistence at a business I have diligently followed for fifteen years; and when I tell you I live amongst—work only for—and am paid by none, but—a small number of poor people, and it will be needless to add I am a poor man myself, you will easily guess to what class of people I now address myself as my Equals. But that you may not be induced to buy my book through charity, I shall tell you, neither my Wife, Children, or Self, have ever yet, thank God, known what it is actually to want; and I have both spirit to feel, and courage to declare, I now write from no motive but benevolence.

LIBERTY

卷之五

Equality

78

LIBERTY
AND
EQUALITY, &c.

HERE has of late been so much talk amongst us about *Liberty* and *Equality*, that it may seem needless for a poor man to give himself the trouble to write about either one or the other : but I find none have at present so much at stake as we middling people, who are in the greatest danger of being deceived into our ruin, by the efforts of artful men, who would persuade us it is for our interest to join them, in asserting our liberty, (as they call it) by subverting the present order of things, and making every one *Equal*. Now to speak the truth, (as I hope I always shall) I must own, I was for a while deceived, as much as my Neighbours ; but then, the snake was so flyly hid in the grass, that I verily believe the Devil himself must have had some hand in placing him there.—Now I'll tell you how this was.

At

At a Public house where my Comrades, and I sometimes go on a Saturday night to chat over our business, and spend six-pence each ; we were frequently met by a thin, pale-faced fellow, whose looks, to be sure, were no great things in his favour, but then he was as clever a body to speak as you shall meet with amongst a thousand ; so much so, that none of us cared to contradict him, even when we knew he did not speak truth.

He was quite a stranger to us, so not knowing his name, we called him the Speaker, though latterly amongst ourselves, Mr. MAC'SERPENT.

The first time I saw him, there were about a dozen of us together, being chiefly working people, and all, thank God, doing pretty well in the world.

After a little common chat about indifferent things, he began to wheedle, and compliment first one and then another of us, just like a Parliament man who wanted our votes, having a laugh ready for every body's story, and a tear to drop for every one's complaint.

Then he began saying, " These were hard times !—very hard times, indeed, for poor working people !—He could not conceive, for his part, how we contrived to live ! it quite made his poor dear heart bleed, to see us so treated, so borne down, and oppressed by the great and rich !"

To be sure we could not miss of being pleased with all this, especially, as he spoke

so like a Friend to us, and seemed to have our happiness so much at heart.

Then he was so kind as to tell us a great deal about France. "Lord bless you," said he, "why every thing is quite different in France, to what it is in England; they do mighty well without laws there—they were taught it by an English gentleman,—a stay-maker; to be sure, it seemed a little droll, just at first to see the Felons hanging the judges, and pretty Women and Children lying murdered about the streets, with here and there a hundred or two of old grey headed Priests, stretched across the way, with their throats cut; but now they are used to it, it is considered as nothing more than a harmless kind of play for the common people, and no body has a right to be so ill-natured as to prevent their amusing themselves."

At other times he would say, "It was a downright shame some folks should get rich so much faster than we did, for there was no doubt we should know how to spend money as well as the best of them, if we had it." Then France was brought up again, where "every thing was now plentiful, for the great men having had their Throats cut, could not eat up all the bread as they used to do, and it was become so cheap and abundant, that the Bakers did not care whether they were paid for it or not. While wheat, good lack! was so un-

"unreasonably dear, and wages so uncon-
"scionably low, that in England, we were
"all starved to death, or what was just as
"good, very soon should be."

Now I really believe if he had told us it hailed two-penny loaves, he would not have pleased us better, than he did by this comfortable assurance that we were all starving;—though at the same time I had something within me, that whispered, I was not quite starved yet.

One night he told us, "All men ought to
"be *Equal*, and on a level; that God made
"us so, but that some people had wickedly
"set themselves over our heads, for no other
"reason but just to have the pleasure of op-
"pressing us." Then he took out of his
pocket a book which he said "treated of the
"Rights of Man, and was written by one
"*Thomas Paine, Citizen.*"

"Citizen," repeated I, "citizen at where?
"Sure it can't be that Thomas Paine that
"had been formerly something of an Excise-
"man or Customhouse officer here in Eng-
"land, but was now turned Frenchman,
"and had been newly made a Citizen of
"France, and Member of the French Con-
"vention; as that's not *your sort*, to tell
"an Englishman any thing for his good,—
"so this, no doubt, must be some worthy
"Gentleman, a distant relation may hap' to
"t'other fellow."

"I'll

" I'll hold a gallon of beer," said my cousin,
 the fat Cooper, who sat opposite me, " he's
 " nothing a kin to him ; if he's half as good a
 " friend to us as this gentleman says he is.
 " An Exciseman indeed ! no ! no ! a better
 " man than that I'll warrant you, some good
 " fellow who never sat his foot in a public
 " house but to drink.—A Citizen of France
 " too ! Why, have you lost your wits, man !
 " Would such an one as that take the trou-
 " ble to write a book for the good of us !
 " no, no, he must be some staunch English-
 " man, a good citizen at London, and more
 " likely Cousin to my Lord Mayor, than to
 " that mungrel Frenchman." He went on
 to banter me for asking such a simple question,
 pointing his finger at me and repeating—" A
 " Fellow, half Exciseman, and half French-
 " man, a friend to old England !"

This made such a laugh against me, that I
 was quite ashamed, and vexed at my own sim-
 plicity, so I answered pretty sharply, " look
 " you, cousin Cooper, as to your holding a
 " gallon of beer, we all know you can do
 " that—and more too, if it's set before you ;
 " ---but tho' I don't chuse to lay wagers, I
 " surely have a Right to ask a question !

" A Right," said Mac'Serpent ! " yes, Sir,
 " you have a right ; its one of the *Rights of*
 " *Man* : here, Friend, I present you with
 " this book, read it, and it will convince you,
 " you have a right both to say, and do, every
 " thing you please ; but in future, be more

" cautious how you mention the name of
 " this great man but with the most profound
 " respect ; had he, indeed, been only a
 " King, or a Prince ; had he been nothing
 " more than a Bishop, a Judge, or a Lord ;
 " nay, had he even been a Gentleman, you
 " might with the greatest propriety have
 " taken any liberties with his name and cha-
 " racter, but he is none of these. He is
 " much greater than a King." Observing
 we looked astonished, he continued, " that
 " this should appear doubtful to you, is not
 " owing so much to your want of sense,
 " as of instruction, and it shall always be my
 " endeavour to improve, and enlarge your
 " minds by degrees, and to explain this
 " matter to you in a familiar, easy way ; an-
 " swer me---which is the greater, the Tun
 " that honest Cooper makes, and unmakes at
 " his pleasure, or the man who makes it ?"
 ---" They're pretty nearly of a size," an-
 swered I.---" As to bulk, I grant it," said
 the Speaker : " but (this is a subject not to be
 " joked with) a man who can not only make
 " and unmake Kings in his leisure hours, but
 " can satisfy the commonest Tinkers they
 " may and ought to do the same, is surely
 " greater than the Kings themselves.---Yes,
 " he is far, far greater than a King---as a
 " Republican, he is the most consequential
 " of Monarchs, and is actually now a
 " Judge---a very King of Kings. Knowing
 " perfectly his real character and views, I
 " only wonder the Patriots,---the real Patriots
 " of

" of every nation, do not unite in fond contention, and pull him limb from limb,
 " that each country might proudly say---
 " Here lies a part of Thomas Paine!"

" If that should ever happen," said a Butcher in company, " I hope I shall have his Heart."---" You have it already," said Mac'Serpent, " and not only you, but every Butcher has his Heart ; he has followed many Trades, and failed in all ; but butchers and butchery were ever his delight ; there's not a page in that invaluable little book but tends to promote that business : in short, Virtue and he are one."

He then sang us some funny Songs ; and, after drinking to us, he read aloud out of a book written by one Rochester, and finished the evening with a few pages about the *Rights of Man*, explaining it to us as he went on, and shewing us, completely to our satisfaction, that we were in the most miserable state possible, without either Liberty or Property belonging to us.

Matters went thus on so long, that some of us, who had hitherto lived Happily and Contented, and really wanted for nothing, began to fancy we were in want of every thing, and had no right to be Happy and Contented any longer ; no, those privileges were not to be found among the *Rights of Man*. My wife, good woman, was quite grieved to see me so changed, both in my Temper of mind and industry ; she would tell me, indeed, what

was true enough, that neither I nor my family wanted for any thing ; she said, I was downright wicked to be so discontented, while I lived so comfortably ; it was ingratitude to God, and, for her part, she could not see the sense of listening, as I did, to a fellow that was always frightening and talking me out of my happiness ; that I was as simple as my neighbour Jenkins, who leaves the Church to follow a Methodist Preacher, because he comforts him every Sunday with the promise of certainly being damned. Now, though I don't like to give way too much to my wife, I could not help being secretly within myself satisfied ; there was a great deal of good sense in what she said. My father too, who is above fourscore, yet has his wits as sharp about him as a Lad, would sometimes reason with me on my growing ill humour and discontent ; he would say, " Ralph ! " thou art wrong, very wrong, to fall out thus with your own happiness ; and for what ? What have you to complain of ? " What is it you want ?" I repeated, as nearly as I could, Mac'Serpent's words, saying, " times were hard---very hard for poor working people---every thing was very dear---and wages very low---the rights of man should be better understood, and every body equal, and then there'd be plenty for us all."---" Pshaw ! pshaw !" said my father, " this has partly been the cant ever since I was a boy. I never knew the time " yet

" yet but what some folks were discontented ;
 " but if you're not satisfied now, more shame
 " for you. I always was a careful man my-
 " self, and your poor mother worked like a
 " horse, but we never could live as you do
 " now-a-days ; we worked hard, and lived
 " hard too, with homely Brown Bread for
 " our Bellies, and home-spun stuffs for our
 " Backs ;---why, if your Poor Mother could
 " look out of her grave, she'd think for cer-
 " tain you were now all turned Gentlefolks,
 " with your Bread as white as a curd---twice
 " a day drinking Tea from the East Indies,
 " with Sugar from the West Indies, and Spi-
 " rits from Holland---with your Wives and
 " Daughters dressed out in their cotton gowns,
 " silk cloaks, high bonnets, and gauzes,
 " ribands, and frippery enough about them
 " to make a wise man laugh, or to keep a
 " poor man's family for a fortnight---and
 " amidst all this, you've impudence enough
 " to say, times are hard---very hard for poor
 " people !---Out ! out upon you ! Had you
 " talk'd as much out of the way when you
 " was a lad, I'd soon have lick'd you into
 " better manners. And then, forsooth, while
 " your women are dressing like Ladies, you
 " must be talking like Parliament-men, about
 " Liberty and Equality. As to Liberty, indeed,
 " it's a word that fits an Englishman's
 " mouth so well, I love to hear it spoken ;
 " and I'll say to you, as my father did to me
 " on his death-bed : I remember it was in

" the

" the little chamber over the kitchen, where,
 " calling me to his bed-side, He said, ' Tom,
 " come hither and receive my last words---
 " May God bless you; and remember by
 " Care and Industry to provide for your fa-
 " mily---by Honesty and Piety take care of
 " your soul; and let neither Rogues in Rags,
 " nor fellows in laced coats, disturb the Li-
 " berty of Old England.—Aye, aye, I
 " love Liberty as well as any man; but for
 " Equality, this is a new touch, a new fa-
 " shion just brought over from France; and
 " I never knew any good come to England
 " from that quarter yet. As to God having
 " made us all equal, it's nonsense---no two
 " men were ever equal yet. Why, there's
 " your brother Dick, he was from his Birth
 " the finest lad of you all; and, now that
 " you're men, you're none of you his equal,
 " either in understanding, skill, or industry,
 " so that he's worth more money already
 " than all of you put together. Never tell
 " me, then, that every body should be equal.
 " Why, you Dog you, you would not go
 " to plunder your brother of his honest earn-
 " ings, because he has got more than your-
 " self?" All this was very right to be sure;
 but, I'm ashamed to say, I liked better to listen
 to Mac'Serpent; for what my Father said made
 me dissatisfied with myself, while Mr. Mac'-
 Serpent only made me dissatisfied with
 other People; so we all kept listening to him,
 till I verily believe, though he found us at first
 all

a'l Contented and Happy, he would very soon have been able to have made us as discontented and miserable as Heart could wish, if it had not been for the following accident :— One night, after talking a great deal in the usual way, about the hardships of the Poor; the Cruelty of the Rich; the dearness of Provisions; the lowness of Wages; and that every body should be equal, and the like, he went on to say, it was our own fault for submitting to it ; that we should make ourselves Heard, and Felt too, as the People in France had done, who were now all free and happy; but that we did not know what Liberty was in England ; for, instead of making every body on a Level, and vindicating our own Liberties, we quietly submitted to be made Slaves,---yes, Slaves ! We were no better than a parcel of pitiful, dirty Slaves.---This was language I did not like ; for I knew I was a free-born Englishman, and Slave to no Man upon earth ; but I did not care to begin talking against him : however, our young Blacksmith, Joe Thomas, (an honest good Fellow, who works hard, and lives well, with a pretty Girl for his Wife, and two brave Children,) sprung from his seat at the word Slaves,--- “ Slaves !” cried he, “ you lie---we are no “ Slaves ;”---and directly dealt him such a blow on his lantern jaws, as levelled him with the dirt. Joe, who is a kind-hearted Lad, though a little too warm and hasty, was the first to hold out a hand to help the

Speaker up again, saying, he was sorry if he had hurt him much, for he meant him no harm, and hoped it would not happen again ; but for the life of him he could not help it, it was a way he always had when he heard Englishmen called Slaves. I must own, we were all well enough pleased with the Blacksmith's spirit : for though (as my wife said of the Methodists liking to hear they were damned,) we found something comfortable in being persuaded we were starved, ill-used, and oppressed, and were All of us pleased at being told we ought to have every thing our own way---we none of us liked being called Slaves : however, peace was soon made ; and Mac'Serpent, to shew his forgiveness, treated Joe with some beer, inquiring, in the mean time, how he was to do in the world. Joe's heart being true English, and always open, told his history, which, though he was some time about, was briefly thus :—His Father, who had burnt not only his inside out, but the Cloaths off his Back, by frequenting gin-shops, was for two years maintained by the Parish, and then died in the Poor-house, leaving a Wife and five little Children, Joe, the eldest, being only Twelve Years Old. Squire Compton, who, God bless him, is always ready to help the Poor, took charge of all the Children, and bound Joe 'prentice to a Blacksmith, who, in working out his time honestly and industriously, hammer'd himself not only into the good-will of his Master,

Master, but of his Daughter also, to whom he has now been married about two years ; and, though he only works under his Father-in-law, he has contrived, by care and industry, to support himself, his Wife, and two Children ; and, with a little help from the Squire, to keep a Cow, a Pig, and some Poultry.

When he had finished his story, Mac'Serpent replied, " Then what with your Cow, " Pigs, Fowls, Household Goods, and the " Implements of your Trade, you must be " worth Twenty Pounds, I warrant."—" I " would not take five and twenty," said Joe. Poor Joe ! little didst thou think, little did any of us think, how near you was to being plundered of these Treasures ; but sure enough, next morning a Pettifogging Attorney was at Joe's house (just as he was sitting down with his Wife to breakfast, and had begun telling her what a Friend to Poor Folks Mr. Mac'Serpent was, and how he loved him for talking so fine about Liberty and Equality.) The Lawyer said, he had directions to bring an action against him for an assault on the person of Mr. Judas Mac'Serpent ; that he would do well to compromise the matter by giving him a Bill of Sale for all his Effects, as by that means, perhaps, Mr. Mac'Serpent's good-nature might be worked upon to withdraw the Action. The young Blacksmith was well enough inclined

to treat the Lawyer as he had done his Client, and to have knocked him down ; but prudence for once got the better ; so he made the best of his way to Squire Compton's, where He, and every other Poor Man, was sure to be kindly received, and to have the best advice, and all the assistance he could possibly expect. In the mean time his Wife was not idle ; she sent her Neighbours to intreat Mac'Serpent not to ruin her Husband, as he would do for ever, if he dealt so very hardly with him.—She had fifty shillings in the house, she said, and would give him every farthing of it : nay, her Cow too, if he would but let her husband off. We all did our best to serve her ; we reminded Mr. Mac' Serpent of his own words, that he always called himself the Poor Man's Friend ; that times were hard—very hard for us poor Working People—that sure he would not be the man to ill use and oppress another—Bread he knew was dear—and Wages low---and poor Joe had four mouths to feed. We reminded him he had often said, Power was in the People's hands, and that it was their part to vindicate their own Liberties, and make themselves heard and felt too ; Joe had done no more than he had taught him he should do ; and we trusted he would forgive a hasty blow.---He answered, with something between a smile and sneer, that as we were all such friends to the Smith, if we would make

up

up Ten pounds amongst us, and Joe would send it him by his Wife, perhaps to oblige us, and shew his regard to the Poor, he might pass over the offence. It was well the poor Fellow did not hear the proposal ; he was within a little of it ; for at that Moment in he came, conducting the Squire, who, after inquiring into the particulars of the business, several times intreated Mac'Serpent to forgive Joe, in consideration of his good character, and for the sake of his Family, who must all be ruined if he persisted ; but his intreaties could make no impression on the heart of Mr. Mac'Serpent, which, when Squire Compton perceived, he walked gravely up to him, and addressed him thus : " Sir, what
 " I have said to you in behalf of this poor
 " Fellow, was only to try to what excesses of
 " cruelty a man who is a *Traitor* to his
 " King and Country could carry his resent-
 " ment."—" Traitor !" replied Mac'Serpent,
 " Bear witness all of you, I am called a
 " Traitor ; you shall pay dearly, Sir, for
 " that word. I'll bring an action."—" Don't
 " bluster here," said the Squire, (taking part
 of a torn letter from his pocket,) " you no
 " doubt would have disowned this letter to
 " belong to you, had I presented it to you
 " when it was first found, which was four
 " days ago. As the direction was torn off I
 " read it, and, finding it contained Treason,
 " I ordered diligent search to be made, and
 " have fortunately procured the other half.

" See, Sir, the torn parts fit exactly, and it
 " is directed to you." Mac'Serpent, whose
 face was generally of a Dirty Yellow hue,
 turned dead white, his Teeth chattered, and
 a dreadful Odour filled the room ; but, re-
 covering himself, he in a moment snatched the
 letter from the Squire's hand, and, stuffing
 it into his mouth, would certainly have swal-
 lowed it, had not Joe Thomas that instant
 seized him by the Throat, and thrusting a
 black finger about four inches into his mouth,
 recovered this Paper which had created so
 much surprize to us all. Mac'Serpent now
 falling on his knees, begged the Squire in his
 turn, not to put the law in force against him,
 as it would be his ruin. He said, he would
 forgive Joe, and return home, never to shew
 his face in the country any more. We were
 all so touched with his Tears, that we joined
 in begging for his pardon, saying, though he
 had been a little too hard with Joe, he was a
 very civil, kind, good sort of Man, and al-
 ways declared himself a Friend to the People
 in general, and to all of us in particular ;
 and, as Joe was ready to forgive him, we
 hoped the Squire would also. But Mr. Compton,
 turning to us with a simile of pity, re-
 plied, " My honest friends, you do not
 " know what you ask ; was it me only that
 " he had offended, my forgiveness should
 " flow as freely from my heart, as do my
 " Prayers and best Services for the good of
 " my country ; but when I detect a Traitor
 " to

" to my Country—a Rebel to my King—
 " a Wretch, who, for the base hire of a little
 " French Money, would subvert the Go-
 " vernment, and sell the Liberties of old
 " England to our inveterate and insidious ene-
 " mies the French.—A Serpent whom you
 " have simply fostered in your bosoms, till he
 " fixed his envenom'd fangs in your hearts,
 " and poisoned your minds with a jealousy of
 " your Superiors, and a discontent of your
 " situation. To let such a Viper escape,
 " would not be mercy, but cruelty. I would
 " as soon turn lose a tyger whom we know
 " would live only to stain the happy fields of
 " England, with the blood of its Labourers.
 " But when I explain to you this Villain's
 " character, you will see, and join in, the
 " justness of my indignation : this Letter is
 " written in the French Language, and from
 " one of those people called Jacobins, which,
 " when turned into English, is exactly thus :

‘ Sir,

‘ The National Convention of France are
 ‘ enchanted to find you and so many other ac-
 ‘ tive men ready to serve the cause of France
 ‘ against England. Your salary is fixed at
 ‘ four livres per day, and for this it is ex-
 ‘ pected of you to do all in your power to
 ‘ create disturbances in different parts of
 ‘ England, so as to promote the views of
 ‘ France, which are first to ruin, and then to
 ‘ subdue your island. To effect this, you
 ‘ must

' must mix, as much as possible, with the
 ' lower orders of People, and endeavour to
 ' make them discontented with their present
 ' situation, and jealous of those above them ;
 ' repeat frequently that every thing is shame-
 ' fully too dear, and that wages are shame-
 ' fully too low. But as I understand a good
 ' workman in England can at most trades
 ' earn, in four days, enough to keep him
 ' the whole week, encourage luxury, drink-
 ' ing, and extravagance amongst them, as
 ' much as possible ; for a Debauched life,
 ' while it increases their expences, naturally
 ' disqualifies them from Earning money, and
 ' must, in the end, bring that real distress we
 ' wish, on themselves and families. I un-
 ' derstand the Harvest in England was rather
 ' unfavourable, this may probably be turned
 ' greatly to our advantage ; but you must
 ' mind how you proceed, for as the People
 ' in England have much natural good sense
 ' about them, and know well enough a bad
 ' Season must make in a greater, or less de-
 ' gree, a scarcity, and consequently an in-
 ' crease in the Price of Provisions : you must
 ' not attempt to persuade them, as we did the
 ' ignorant people in France, that it was the
 ' King, the Lords, and other great Folks,
 ' that spoiled the Season ; or that however
 ' scarce Wheat was, Bread should always be
 ' at the same price : no, that won't go down
 ' with them ; but you must pass over the
 ' Harvest as well as you can, repeating fre-
 ' quently,

'quently, " every thing is so shamefully
 " dear, poor folks cannot live."—Thus,
 ' while you are fomenting discontent amongst
 ' them, you are to endeavour, as far as pos-
 ' sible, to lessen their respect for their Supe-
 ' riors,—and more especially take pains, to
 ' lower the attachment they have to their
 ' King.—But here again I should advise
 ' you to take care how you proceed, for
 ' I am informed the King of England is
 ' greatly beloved by his People, being uni-
 ' versally respected for his Private Virtues—
 ' his Love of Mercy, and constant attention to
 ' the welfare of his subjects ; therefore, you
 ' must proceed with caution, or it is ten to
 ' one, you are either knocked down at the
 ' time you are speaking against him---or are
 ' tied up to a Gibbet soon after. It will be no
 ' bad way, to have always ready in your
 ' pocket, a few small Books to produce, as oc-
 ' casion requires ; for instance, a collection
 ' of the loosest Songs and Stories you can get.
 ' A translation of a blasphemous Book I'll send
 ' you from France against Christianity ;—and
 ' Tom Paine's Rights of Man ; they will do
 ' very well bound up together, and cannot fail,
 ' if duly attended to, corrupting many weak
 ' minds, and will certainly be pleasing to
 ' those who are already corrupted. We were
 ' much grieved to hear the People had, in
 ' many parts of England, been burning
 ' Thomas Paine in Effigy ; I hope they do
 ' not

' not begin to discover what a Cat's Paw he
 ' has been trying to make of them. Always
 ' deny his being a Citizen of France, and
 ' Member of the National Convention, for
 ' you'll never persuade people who know
 ' what a thorough Frenchman he now is,
 ' that he can possibly be a Friend to England:
 ' no, no, they know Frenchmen too well for
 ' that. I have also to add, it is expected of
 ' you to use all the dispatch you possibly can,
 ' for if you and our other good friends cannot
 ' contrive to create an Insurrection in Eng-
 ' land, I fear we shall most of us be forced to
 ' fly from France, without having any other
 ' Country open to us; as the people here be-
 ' gin to find out, how we have led them by
 ' the Nose to their ruin; for we assured them,
 ' they had only to help us to destroy the King,
 ' the Nobles, and Clergy, and there would
 ' be Liberty, Equality, Happiness, and Plen-
 ' ty, for every body. But they find now, we
 ' only set them to murder the Great, that we
 ' might take their places ourselves; and that
 ' instead of Happiness and Plenty, they are
 ' fallen into the most deplorable Misery and
 ' Distress. The Rich being all either mur-
 ' dered or driven from the Kingdom; the
 ' People have now no-body to work for, con-
 ' sequently they can earn nothing; while Pro-
 ' visions in general, and Bread in particular,
 ' is so scarce, that Hundreds are actually
 ' dying of Hunger. To mention one amongst

' a mul-

‘ a multitude of such cases, we sent Commissioners from the Convention, to the Department of *Var*, to inquire into the cause of the discontent the people began to shew, at the Happy state we had placed them in ; when the Commissioners came to make their report in the Convention, I thought some of us must have died with laughing ; and as I know you have spirit to enjoy a joke of this sort, I’ll tell it you, in the dull old stile, which gives it much of its Poignancy.—The Commissioners, after telling us they had fulfilled our Orders, said, they found the Misery and Distress of the People at the height.—They would present us with one small picture, which though a miniature was a just representation of the situation of the whole Department. A Poor woman (whose husband was decoyed away under the idea he was going to defend the Liberties of his Country) with two Children, one in the cradle, the other just old enough to put its Little hands together, and pray to its Mother for a bit of Bread ; having subsisted some time on a mixture of Bran and Cabbage ; this poor woman went at last with her only remaining six-pence to purchase a small Loaf ; the Baker assured her, he had neither Bread nor Flour in the house ; so she returned home, and after lying all night distracted with her own sufferings, and the piercing cries of her Children ; sh eset out again early in the morning, but still receiving the

same answer, she was obliged to return
 empty handed : in her way, she could not
 help casting a mournful Eye at the great
 Manor House, saying within herself, had
 not my Husband, amongst others, helped
 to murder the Master of that Mansion, I
 should not now be at a loss where to apply
 for a morsel of Bread—but Repentance came
 too late, she returned home, and endeavoured
 by tenderness and caresses, to ap-
 pease the agonies of her starving Children.
 But Her breast, whose milk was absorbed
 by Famine, was in vain presented to allay
 the quick faint cries of the younger Infant ;
 nor could the new Rattle any longer allure
 the attention of the elder child from the
 urgent calls of Hunger ; it's agonies became
 every moment more violent, and its solici-
 tations and caresses more touching ; repeat-
 edly did it try those pleasing efforts, and en-
 gaging ways, which in happier days insured
 its obtaining from the fond Parents every tri-
 fling object of indulgence it besought. In vain
 were all its Little Hands, emaciated with Fa-
 mine, placed together, and Pray ! Pray ! re-
 peated. It all served but to heighten the distrac-
 tion of the Mother, who once more set out
 in search of Bread ; but the Bakers were now
 themselves dying with hunger, and the
 distresses of her Neighbours, were at least
 equal to her own ; the anguish of her
 Body and Mind were heightened beyond en-
 durance, and she returned home in a state
 of

‘ of distraction, where she found her Children worn out with suffering in a state between sleep and death ; but dreading to hear their cries repeated, and to see them wake and cling round her for food she could not supply ; she formed the horrid resolution of terminating their sufferings at once, and actually destroyed them in their sleep, to prevent their waking to undergo farther suffering. What made this joke the better, was to think how the Father of this Family was employed in the mean time ; He, Poor Fool, with a musquet ball in his Leg, was marching, half naked, half famished, and bare-footed, over Ice and frozen ground, to plant, amidst the Snow in Brabant, what we call, the Tree of Liberty ; under the persuasion, Poor Creature, that all this was exemplifying the *Rights of Man*, and highly for the advantage of himself and Family. But you must keep all this from the People of England, as you will never be able to excite them to fly in the face of power, if they are informed beforehand of the consequences that must ensue from the subversion of order,—the confounding the different classes of mankind, and the suspension of Labour and Industry ; besides, the People of England are not such refined Philosophers as we are, they are not yet able like us, amiable and enlightened Frenchmen, to look with indifference, nay, with pleasure, on the Sufferings and Distresses of their Fellow worl D 2 “ Crea-

' Creatures. For, Sir, to the honour or
 ' France, and the feelings of a Frenchman,
 ' I can assure you I have, myself, seen with
 ' pleasure, Grey-headed Priests, Beautiful
 ' young Women, and Children of all ages,
 ' murdered in the Public Streets, at Noon day,
 ' under the most exquisite refinement of what
 ' formerly would have been called studied
 ' cruelty, and licentious Indecency.—I have
 ' dwelt the longer on these laughable circum-
 ' stances, to prepare you the better for the Fun
 ' you must expect to see in England, when
 ' our glorious Plan takes place there. When
 ' the Confusion amongst you is at the height,
 ' write word only, "*we are ready,*" and we
 ' will send over to you, some bands of arm-
 ' ed men, who will soon completely finish
 ' the ruin of that Island, which has so often
 ' humbled the pride of France.'

Here ended the Letter; and it is hard to say, whether we were most Ashamed, Frightened, or Enraged. We were Ashamed of our own simplicity that such a Wretch should have talked us so far out of our senses, as to make us fancy Evils we did not feel, and which, indeed, we knew perfectly well, had no existence in reality: we were ashamed, too, of the ungrateful things he made us sometimes say against the Gentlefolks in the neighbourhood, who are all Real kind friends to us, and to whom many of us had the greatest obligations. We were frightened at the idea how

how near we were to having been Rebels,—Traitors,—and Subverters of the Liberties of our Country : we were conscious too, we had many of us actually gone so far, as to endeavour to communicate to others, those Maxims Mac'Serpent had instilled into us ; consequently were not without uneasiness, lest we should be considered as accomplices in his Villany.

We were enraged at the reflection of having been fooled by such a Scoundrel, and at our own stupidity in not seeing he was only making us the Tools of his Villany. But when we looked at the Figure of the Wretch, saw how like an Assassin he looked, and knew he was, beyond all doubt, proved to be a Traitor to our dear and happy Country,—a Reb l to our good and beloved King,—and a Serpent who had endeavoured to imbitter, by his Poison, the bread of the Labourer, by creating discontent in our minds, and a jealousy of our Superiors ; we could with difficulty refrain from tearing him to pieces.

But the Squire reproved us, saying, it would be highly dangerous, and unjustifiable for us, to destroy a fellow creature, at the impulse of our own passions ;—the life of a man was of too great import to be forfeited, till after a solemn and formal trial, and he had, by the Laws of his country, been condemned to Death.—Happily for Englishmen, our laws, though ever inclined to mercy, and serving as a sure guard and protection to the innocent,

were too good,—too wisely formed,—to suffer such a Wretch to escape their just vengeance.—He then addressed us thus:

“ You see here a sad example of human depravity, and I wish I could say he was the only Monster of the kind who wishes to plunge a Dagger in the Breast of his Mother Country.—But I fear there are too many of these Agents, who are paid by France, to excite discontents and insurrections amongst us, as the only means of subverting a Country, at the very name of which she trembles.—These wretches would be the less dangerous, was it not for that readiness with which the lower orders amongst us catch fire at, and join in any cry the artful and wicked hang out for them. You are too jealous, my honest friends, not only of Those who fill the higher ranks of life, but too apt to be Envious of those of your own order, who have by superior skill and industry, surpassed you in attainments, or the acquisition of Fortune ; this makes you, I am sorry to say, ready to listen to, and adopt any system the ill-designing hold out, if they can persuade you it will be the means of gratifying those passions which are unworthy of a place in minds naturally Generous.—But you may depend upon it, there can be no just way of your becoming Equal to those who are now Above you in life, but by the efforts of honest industry, assisted by a strict

“ Fru-

" Frugality ; and on such a foundation every
 " Englishman may build in reasonable expec-
 " tation, under God's blessing, of raising his
 " house to Grandeur, in the course of Time : It
 " is true, all men have not the same Oppor-
 " tunities, or the same Abilities to help them
 " forward in life ; God has not given every
 " man an equal degree of understanding, or
 " of Bodily strength, to make his way with ;
 " from whence it is plain he meant there
 " should be different Degrees and Orders
 " amongst men ; though few are so much
 " inferior to others but they can, (if they ex-
 " ercise their best and proper efforts,) obtain a
 " sufficiency to ensure them the enjoyment of
 " the necessary comforts of life ; and if they are
 " careful to instil Proper Habits of Industry,
 " and Sentiments of Morality, into the minds of
 " their Children, they may probably arrive at
 " a degree of Eminence their Parents did not
 " attain to ; not that I consider an advance-
 " ment of Fortune to be a Certain Increase of
 " Happiness ; it has often, I believe I may
 " say generally, a different effect, especially
 " if Pride, Vanity, or Ambition have been
 " the Spring of our Industry, and Spurred us
 " forward in our Attainments ; these passions
 " are insatiable ; and every fresh acquisition
 " we make, instead of allaying their Fervour,
 " adds fuel to a flame always too Ardent, to
 " allow the breast that harbours them the
 " enjoyment of that Tranquillity and Content
 " which is the best, and, indeed, only foun-
 " dation

" dation for Happiness. You may believe
" me, then, when I assure you, that the
" Great have no advantages over You, but
" what are fully counterbalanced by sufferings
" you are free from. If the rich are exempt
" from labouring, they have rarely the health
" of the labourer; and their time, their very
" Existence, is often a burthen to them for
" want of Employment. If they suffer not
" from hunger, the utmost Art of a Cook is
" requisite to prepare a meal they can relish.
" If they are less exposed to the inclemencies
" of the Seasons, the tone of their nerves, re-
" laxed by indulgence, hath neither the force
" nor energy of a Peasant's; and as the Coun-
" tenance is in this respect the index of
" the heart, turn your eyes, first on the
" crowded Assemblies of the Great, and af-
" terwards on the Festive Meetings of the
" Lower Clas\$, and ask yourselves which
" party Happiness seems to join with---ob-
" serve the Languor, the painful lassitude that
" reigns through the former, and contrast it
" with the Cheerful flow of spirits, and ges-
" tive roars of Laughter that exhilarates the
" latter. Yes, my honest friends, the higher
" orders deserve your Pity, at least as fre-
" quently, as your Envy. When God laid,
" as he clearly has done, a foundation for
" different orders and ranks in Society, he
" was too just, too impartial a Father to
" us all, to make an unequal distribution
" of Happiness, which he has rendered
" equally

"equally attainable by all ; and the highest,
 "or lowest, must arrive at it by the same
 "means ; namely, by the cultivation of mo-
 "ral virtues, by preserving a Conscience void
 "of offence towards God and man--and each
 "doing the Duties of that state of life in
 "which it has pleased God to place us.---
 "These habits alone can produce Tranquillity
 "and Contentment, without which the Great
 "Man in his Palace, and the Poor Man in
 "his Cottage, must be alike, and equally
 "miserable.—View then the Rich Man, not
 "as an object of your Envy, but as a Fellow
 "Creature, placed above you to fill a station,
 "without which some of the brightest virtues
 "of humanity could not be exercised. Why
 "has Providence rendered Charity, Muni-
 "fiscence, and Generous Hospitality so ami-
 "able, if he did not mean these Virtues
 "should be displayed ? And how can they
 "be displayed, if there is no Rich Man to
 "give, or Poor one to receive ? If you
 "say the cultivation of these virtues is some-
 "times neglected by the Great,—what con-
 "clusion can you draw from such an abuse
 "of power ? We ought only to lament, that
 "in such instances we find men who are in-
 "capable of tasting the most refined pleasure
 "a sensitive mind can enjoy, and which Pro-
 "vidence seems to have given them the
 "means of gratifying, purposely to compen-
 "sate for the Troubles and Anxieties, the
 "Tedium Formalities, and Endless Restraints

" which are attendant on greatness.---It is
 " certain the Riches of one man are not ne-
 " cessarily either the Cause or Consequence
 " of another's wants. The Great man can
 " consume no more of the necessaries of life
 " than does the Poor man ; therefore, if the
 " latter suffers from Hunger, it is not because
 " the great man hath Eaten more than his
 " share of bread, (for that Providence has
 " rendered impossible) but it must have hap-
 " pened from a neglect of the due observance
 " of the duties necessarily imposed on the
 " different orders of society ; that is, the
 " poor man's sufferings must have originated
 " either from neglecting the duties of *his*
 " Station, which are industry and œconomy ;
 " or from the rich man's neglecting, what
 " is equally *his* duty ; namely, a readiness
 " to attend to and succour those who are in
 " a state of want, supposing that state re-
 " sults not from Idleness or Profligacy. View,
 " then, the great man as the source from
 " which the necessaries of life flow, and
 " are distributed amongst Thousands, he is,
 " in reality, no more than the poor man's
 " Treasurer,—a kind of public Banker,
 " from whom every one that works, be his
 " trade what it will, draws his sustenance :
 " hence, while the Envious Man views the
 " splendid Equipage of Pomp with the ma-
 " lignant Jealousy of a Demon, the Philo-
 " sophic and Benevolent Observer contem-
 " plates it with pleasure, as displaying mu-
 " tual

"tual Obligations, equally conferred and received by the different ranks of society;
 "for while he views the Pomp and Grandeur
 "of state, supported by the labour of the
 "Mechanic, he reflects that the wants of the
 "Mechanic, in return, must have been sup-
 "ported from the Hand of Opulence; I
 "hope, then, you are convinced, that gra-
 "dations in Rank are indispensably necessary
 "for the well-being of Society; nay, I will
 "not hesitate to assert, that you cannot
 "lower *One* great Man, without more es-
 "sentially injuring a multitude of poor ones;
 "as hundreds of Mechanics obtain their
 "daily bread, by fabricating splendid Trifles,
 "which none could purchase but from the
 "superfluities of their fortune."

When the Squire first began speaking to us, we all stood round him with our Hats on, a habit we had lately imbibed from Mac' Serjeant's lessons, thinking we thereby asserted our Equality and Liberty; but we now began to think such behaviour was a mark, not of our Liberty, but Impudence; so one after another in succession, (as we had been more or less tainted in our principles by Mac'Serpent) began to assume a more respectful and becoming deportment, and to bow and thank him for his good advice; the Fat Cooper said, "he was never so pleased in his life, as "he was now, to find he had no occasion to "be discontented or envious any longer: "that Mac'Serpent had told him it was his "duty as an Englishman, to be out of hu-

" mour, and as he saw all his neighbours
 " being so, he had done his best to be like
 " Them, but it went most confoundedly
 " against his nature.—However, that was
 " all cleared up now, and if he lived to a
 " hundred, he should always consider the
 " Rich Man, in future, as nothing more
 " than—the Poor man's Goose ; who was his
 " support while he let Her lay her golden
 " Eggs gradually. But when tempted by
 " the Devil, and his own greediness, he
 " cut her open, He not only destroyed his
 " best Friend, but died of hunger, because
 " she was no longer at hand to supply his
 " wants. I think, continued he, if I should
 " come across another of these Jacobine
 " Scoundrels, I shall know how to handle
 " him ; but for fear he should be too cun-
 " ning for me, I shall be glad if you can
 " give me a few directions, that I may be
 " sure I don't get a wrong Sow by the ear ;
 " because I suppose, Sir, a man may talk
 " about Liberty, and all that, without being
 " one of these Jacobine Frenchmen."

" Undoubtedly," answered the Squire ;
 " for of all Men who pronounce that glo-
 " rious word Liberty, the French Jacobine
 " knows the least what it means. Their
 " nation, Vain and Impetuous, is for ever in
 " the extremes ; from Slavery they have
 " passed at once to licentious Anarchy, over-
 " looking that Golden mean which Liberty,
 " like the Moral Virtues, consists in ; emer-
 " ging

" ging from the profoundest Ignorance, they
 " are at once become, in their own opinions,
 " the most sublime Philosophers; from the
 " meanest servants, of the meanest trades,
 " they have many of them become at once
 " Senators and the Greatest Statesmen; while
 " avowed Atheists and Felons, just issued
 " from the Gallies and Prisons, are reforming
 " the Religion of their country · and all
 " this amidst a universal cry of Liberty, which
 " it resembles no more than their present
 " Famine does the Plenty of England. But
 " let us leave them for the present to the
 " sufferings and misery their wicked enor-
 " mities have justly brought on them. As
 " to giving such rules as shall guide you to
 " the sure discovery of these dangerous
 " Agents, paid to promote discontent and in-
 " surrection here, I fear it is impossible, they
 " artfully assume so many shapes, and in-
 " sinuate their poison by such different means,
 " it is very difficult to set you on your
 " guard against them; and what makes the
 " the Difficulty still greater, is the Danger
 " you are liable to, of being seduced by
 " such amongst your Friends and neigh-
 " bours as you respect, and whose opinion
 " you look up to, who having been de-
 " ceived or corrupted themselves, easily
 " communicate the infection through the
 " whole circle of their acquaintance. But
 " I advise you to be very cautious how you
 " listen to any man, whose conversation
 " seems

" Seems calculated to make you discontented
 " with your own Situation, or the Laws, or
 " Government of your Country.—Should
 " our glorious Constitution, that Bulwark of
 " Liberty ; which is the Pride and Glory of
 " Englishmen, ever bein danger from the at-
 " tacks of its Foreign, or Domestic Enemies ;
 " depend upon it you will be warned of your
 " Peril by the Greatest and most respectable
 " Members of Society, who, as you may ob-
 " serve, (on the present attempt to subvert our
 " Liberties by the introduction of Anarchy,)
 " have come forward themselves, and called
 " on you to assist their Efforts, to support Or-
 " der in Society, and the liberties of the State.
 " When you hear the Dissenter talking
 " warmly of Liberty and Republicanism,
 " however you may respect the man for his
 " social virtues ; as an Englishman, you
 " cannot respect his Political Principles, for
 " the Liberties of a Republican are certainly
 " not the Liberties of an Englishman, which
 " are founded on another Basis, and are esta-
 " blished under a Government consisting of a
 " King, Lords, and Commons. To enlarge on
 " the blessings we enjoy under such a form of
 " Government, is needless ; our Fathers be-
 " queathed it to us, and I hope we shall main-
 " tain it at the expence of our blood, rather
 " than not transmit it pure and entire to our
 " children. For who is there amongst us,
 " who does not feel he enjoys under it, Li-
 " berty in its truest and fullest extent, which
 " consists

" consists in every man being able to do what
" he pleases, that is not detrimental to
" another."

Here the Squire took his leave of us, ordering Mac'Serpent into the hands of a Constable, and a Bucket full of Strong Beer for us, in which we drank CHURCH, and KING, and OLD ENGLAND for ever.

F I N I S.

(१५२)

THE OLD ENGLISH DIALOGUE

卷之二

